

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MADRID 06490 071604Z

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TAGS: PINT, PFOR, SOCI, SP, VT

SUBJECT: TOP VATICAN OFFICIAL VISITS SPAIN

BEGIN SUMMARY. VATICAN'S MSGR. CASAROLI VISITED SPAIN NOV 1-3 WHERE HE HELD LENGTHY CONVERSATIONS WITH FONMIN LOPEZ-RODO AND SEVERAL SPANISH BISHOPS REGARDING LONG-STALLED CONCORDAT NEGOTIATIONS. WHILE ALL DIFFICULT AND THORNY ISSUES REGARDING CONCORDAT REMAIN, THIS VISIT SIGNIFIES FRESH START AND A NEW ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS ON SUBJECT IN AN IMPROVED ATMOSPHERE. END SUMMARY.

1. MSGR. AGOSTINO CASAROLI, VATICAN SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS, VISITED MADRID IN CONNECTION WITH STALLED CONCORDAT NEGOTIATIONS FROM NOV 1-3. VISIT WAS BILLED BY VATICAN AS AN "UNOFFICIAL TECHNICAL STOP" ON CASAROLI'S RETURN TO ROME FROM THE US, ALTHOUGH IT RESPONDED TO OFFICIAL INVITATION EXTENDED TO CASAROLI BY FONMIN LOPEZ-RODO AT CSCE TALKS IN HELSINKI IN JULY.

2. DURING VISIT, CASAROLI CALLED UPON PRESIDENT CARRERO BLANCO, MET NEW JUSTICE MINISTER RUIZ JARABO, AND HAD VARIOUS LENGTHY MEETINGS WITH FOREIGN MINISTER LOPEZ-RODO. HE ALSO HELD EXTENSIVE CONSULTATIONS WITH PAPAL NUNCIO
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PAGE 02 MADRID 06490 071604Z

DADAGLIO, AND WITH VARIOUS LEADING MEMBERS OF SPANISH

BISHOP'S CONFERENCE, INCLUDING CARDINALS ENRIQUE Y TARANCON OF MADRID, GONZALEZ MARTIN OF TOLEDO, JUBANY ARNAU OF BARCELONA, AND SECRETARY OF EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE MSGR. YANES.

3. AT CONCLUSION OF VISIT, CASAROLI AND LOPEZ-RODO ISSUED NONCOMMITTAL JOINT COMMUNIQUE WHICH SHED LITTLE LIGHT ON THEIR DISCUSSIONS BUT WHICH EMPHASIZED THEIR DECISION TO PROCEED WITH RENEWED NEGOTIATIONS FOR REVISION AND UPDATING OF CONCORDAT.

4. COMMENT: BENEATH THE PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION OF A RENEWED SPIRIT OF DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION, STILL LIE THE TANGLED AND OFTEN CONFLICTING POSITIONS ON BASIC ISSUES BETWEEN THE HOLY SEE AND THE GOS. THE VATICAN DESIRES, INTER ALIA, (A) A NEARLY COMPLETE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE AND RENUNCIATION BY THE CHURCH OF MOST OR ALL OF ITS SPECIAL PRIVILEGES; (B) THE TOTAL RENUNCIATION BY THE GOS OF ITS VOICE IN THE NAMING OF BISHOPS; (C) COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE OF THE CHURCH WITH RESPECT TO ITS PUBLICATIONS, IN ITS ECCLESIASTICAL ASSOCIATIONS, AND IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION; AND (D) A JURIDICAL RECOGNITION BY THE GOS OF THE SPANISH BISHOPS CONFERENCE. THE GOS, ON THE OTHER HAND, REPORTEDLY (A) DOES NOT WISH TO ABANDON ENTIRELY ITS VETO POWER OVER THE PRESENTATION OF BISHOPS; (B) PREFERS TO BYPASS THE SPANISH BISHOPS CONFERENCE AND DEAL DIRECTLY WITH THE VATICAN ON THE CONCORDAT AND OTHER CHURCH-RELATED MATTERS; AND (C) WISHES TO DELINEATE IN ANY REVISED CONCORDAT THE RESPECTIVE FIELDS OF ACTION OF CHURCH AND STATE, EXCLUDING THE CHURCH FROM THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SPHERES WHICH THE GOS REGARDS AS ITS EXCLUSIVE PRESERVES.

5. COMPLICATING THESE RENEWED AND AS YET VERY PRELIMINARY NEGOTIATIONS IS A THIRD PARTY, BESIDES THE GOS AND THE VATICAN, I.E., THE LIBERAL SPANISH BISHOPS CONFERENCE ITSELF. THE SPANISH EPISCOPATE'S POSITION IS A TOUGHER AND MORE LIBERAL ONE ON MANY OF THE ABOVE ISSUES (E.G. SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE AND THE RIGHT OF THE CHURCH TO ENTER THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL REALMS) THAN THAT OF THE HOLY SEE, AND THE BISHOPS CONFERENCE IS SOMEWHAT NERVOUS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MADRID 06490 071604Z

THAT SOME OF ITS POSITIONS MIGHT BE BARGAINED AWAY BY THE VATICAN IN ANY NEGOTIATIONS (HENCE ITS DESIRE TO HAVE ITS VOICE RECOGNIZED AND HEARD, AND CASAROLI'S CARE TO SPEND ALMOST AS MUCH TIME WITH LEADING BISHOPS AS WITH LOPEZ-RODO). ONE AREA WHERE THERE IS REPORTED TO BE A POSSIBLE IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE OF VIEWS BETWEEN THE VATICAN AND THE SPANISH EPISCOPATE IS ON THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION OF WHETHER THERE SHOULD BE A NEW CONCORDAT NEGOTIATED. THE

GOS DESIRES A NEW CONCORDAT, AND THE HOLY SEE ALSO POSSIBLY MIGHT NOW FAVOR ONE. HOWEVER, THE SPANISH EPISCOPATE OPPOSES A NEW CONCORDAT AND AT MOST IS ONLY AMENABLE TO PARTIAL ACCORDS OR REVISIONS OF THE 1953 ONE, SINCE THEY BELIEVE A NEW CONCORDAT MIGHT ONCE AGAIN ASSOCIATE THE CHURCH WITH THE REGIME AND IN THEIR CURRENT POST-CONCILIAR MOOD THEY ARE PRECISELY TRYING TO DIS-ASSOCIATE THE CHURCH FROM THE GOS IN THE EYES OF THE SPANISH PUBLIC. THE BISHOPS CONFERENCE BELIEVES IT CAN BETTER MAINTAIN ITS LIBERAL IMAGE IF ONLY PARTIAL ACCORDS ON THE MOST VITAL POINTS OF FRICTION IN THE 1953 CONCORDAT ARE RENEGOTIATED.

6. DESPITE THE "UNOFFICIAL" NATURE OF CASAROLI'S VISIT, THE GOS HAS PROMOTED EXTENSIVE PRESS AND TELEVISION COVERAGE OF THE VISIT AND HAS SOUGHT TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT IT REPRESENTS SOMETHING OF A VICTORY FOR SPANISH DIPLOMACY AND IS THE START OF STEPPED-UP NEGOTIATIONS WHICH WILL LEAD TO A NEW CONCORDAT. THERE IS, HOWEVER, NO DOUBT THAT CASAROLI'S VISIT, AND LOPEZ-RODO'S PREVIOUS CONTACTS WITH CASAROLI IN HELSINKI IN JULY, WERE INTENDED TO GET THE NEGOTIATIONS ON THIS CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE OUT OF THE IMPASSE AND POISONED ATMOSPHERE THAT THEY HAD REACHED UNDER LOPEZ BRAVO. THERE APPEARS TO BE A GENUINE DESIRE OF BOTH THE PART OF THE GOS AND THE VATICAN TO GET THESE NEGOTIATIONS MOVING ONCE AGAIN.

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